

Community cinemas and film societies can operate in very different ways, in a variety of settings. It can sometimes be difficult to know where to start or who to talk to when it comes to making your venue and screenings more accessible to audiences who may have disabilities. This document is the first in a series of accessibility documents by Cinema For All, designed to help you become more informed and gain a better understanding of how to make your screening venue more accessible for audiences who are deaf or hard of hearing.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY CINEMA MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR AUDIENCES WITH HEARING DIFFICULTIES?

1. Providing information for audiences in advance
2. Programming subtitled films (even English language films)
3. Using BSL interpreters
4. Using induction loops and infrared systems
5. Train your volunteers or staff

1. PROVIDING INFORMATION

Many people with hearing difficulties will often check in advance to see if a venue has the facilities they need. When attending a cinema, this can be anything from an induction loop, to checking if a screening is subtitled or closed captioned, or if there is a BSL interpreter there to offer support if needed. Make sure your website, around your venue and your marketing materials all give information on how your screening or venue is accessible for audiences with hearing difficulties:

ST: This stands for 'subtitled' and the letters 'ST' can be placed alongside the film information for your screening, alongside the synopsis, film certificate etc. However, to make this clearer you can also add 'subtitled screening'. Place this information on your marketing materials, website and anywhere you are advertising the screening. If your film screening has subtitles for Hard of Hearing audiences (closed captions) then display this on your marketing and advertising of the screening e.g. 'The film will be screened with subtitles for Hard of Hearing'.

BSL: BSL stands for British Sign Language.

'I've never been to any of the films shown in our village hall, or in neighbouring villages because they never have subtitles. My daughter is profoundly deaf and can't enjoy cinema without subtitles, so our only option is a much longer journey to one of the larger cinemas, which generally only have one subtitled screening a week. The general opinion seems to be that people who do not have a hearing impairment will not want to watch a film if it is shown with subtitles. Is this true?'

Janet Mayes

2. PROGRAMMING SUBTITLED FILMS

Programming subtitled or captioned screenings as part of your programme is a simple way to make your screenings accessible for audiences with hearing difficulties and can really enhance their viewing experience. Lots of community cinemas screen foreign language films with subtitles but others also screen English language films with subtitles and hard of hearing subtitles too.

DVD/BLU RAY: Most DVDs and Blu-rays have the option to play English subtitles; however this will generally only display dialogue, and not describe the action. Hard of hearing subtitles (closed captions) will show the dialogue and non-dialogue sounds such as sound effects (e.g. footsteps), audio cues and song lyrics of soundtracks. Check with the distributor of the film you are screening if the copy of the film they are sending you has the option to view it with English subtitles, or with hard of hearing subtitles. If you are screening from your own copy you can check if the disc has subtitles or closed captions. It should state this on the back of the case.

DCP: If you screen films using a DCP format it is important to check whether it has captions/subtitles (CS – Captioned subtitling) added to the file as not all film releases do. However, more and more films on DCP format are becoming equipped with subtitles, and you can check if a DCP has captions/subtitles by contacting the distributor. [Your Local Cinema](#) also lists all new releases that are available to be screened with subtitles, and can help you search for a cinema that is screening subtitled films.

35MM: It is uncommon for a 35mm print to have English subtitles or hard of hearing subtitles (closed captions) for an English language film. Contact the distributor for information on whether a 35mm print has English subtitles.

3. USING BSL INTERPRETERS

You can add value to your audiences' experience by ensuring additional aspects of your screening such as an introduction before the film or a Q&A are BSL interpreted. You can highlight this on your website and marketing materials etc. E.g. *this screening will have an introduction prior to the film that will be BSL interpreted.*

ISL (Irish Sign Language) interpreters are also available for communication support at events for audiences who communicate using ISL.

NRCPD (The National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People) exists to protect the public by regulating communication and language professionals who work with deaf and deafblind people. It is important to work with sign language interpreters that are registered as qualified. If you wish to book a sign language interpreter for communication support for your screening or event, visit <http://www.nrcpd.org.uk/>. You can enter the postcode of your venue to help find sign language interpreters close by. There are no standard costs for the services for hiring a sign language interpreter but once you have contacted a sign language interpreter, they will inform you of their service costs.

4. HAVING INDUCTION LOOPS/ INFRA RED SYSTEMS

HEARING LOOPS: Hearing loops or induction loops are pieces of equipment usually fitted around the cinema seats or walls of a venue. They transmit a magnetic field that is picked up by

the hearing aid and helps to reduce background noise. People with hearing aids simply switch their hearing aid to the 'T' setting or loop programme to use the hearing loop. Induction loops can also be installed at kiosk/box office points in venues.

If you have a hearing loop system installed at your venue you can signify this by displaying the Hearing Loop logo (pictured below); at your venue, on your website and social media channels as well as on your marketing materials e.g, posters and flyers. You should also specify the points in your venue that are fitted with a hearing loop e.g, the box office or inside cinema screen.



INFRARED SYSTEMS: Some cinemas use an infrared system instead of an induction loop. An infrared system shines infrared rays into the auditorium and the sound is picked up by a receiver. There are four different listening devices that can be used with an infrared system:

- 1) **INFRARED NECKLOOP:** This is for a person with a hearing aid. A person who wears a hearing aid would put the neckloop around their neck and switch their hearing aid to the T setting or loop programme. The neckloop has an infrared receiver, which needs to be facing the screen so the sound can be picked up from the infrared system.
- 2) **INFRARED HEADSETS:** Infrared headsets are for people who are hard of hearing but do not use a hearing aid. People with hearing aids should not use this headset. The headset is worn like earphones and it has an infrared receiver around the neck that needs to be facing the screen.
- 3) **INFRARED RECEIVER:** The infrared receiver works in a similar way to the infrared headset and neckloop. The user can plug either headphones, a neckloop or ear hooks into the headphone socket in the receiver. Both people who wear hearing aids and people who do not can use an infrared receiver, depending on which type of equipment is plugged into the receiver.
- 4) **INFRARED HEADPHONES:** These are usually used by people who are hard of hearing but do not wear a hearing aid. The headphones are worn over the ears (or over the ears and hearing aid for hearing aid users) with the

'I am a frequent attendee at our local arts centre to watch films in the small public cinema there. I am also a member of a local hard-of-hearing group. I prefer to watch films with subtitles for obvious reasons. About a year ago the cinema was fitted out with a loop system, after requests from our film society and the hard-of-hearing society, though I shall continue to enjoy films with subtitles.'

David Maxwell, Vice Chair of Bracknell Film Society

receiver facing the screen. Cinemas that offer Audio Description use the same headphones so it is important to make sure they are on the right channel setting for the use of people who are hard of hearing. ⁱ

There is no industry standard logo for infrared systems. If you have an infrared system you can display this in your marketing and advertising by simply stating you have one available in your cinema and which kind of listening devices are available.

If you have accessibility equipment such as infrared systems/induction loops, you should have someone in your team who is trained on the equipment and responsible for looking after it. You can download a free 'Know Your Equipment' handout from the Action on Hearing Loss website. It includes an equipment checklist which you can [download](#), as well as information on each type of equipment.

5. INFORMED STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Keeping your staff and volunteers informed on disability guidelines and ways they can be of assistance to audiences with hearing difficulties, can help them feel more confident and make your community cinema more accessible.

You can request a free Deaf Awareness pack from **Action On Hearing Loss**, which contains useful information on being Deaf aware and tips on communicating with people with hearing difficulties. The pack includes a fingerspelling alphabet and a helpful 'Learning British Sign Language' leaflet.

HELPFUL WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Your Local Cinema:

A website dedicated to providing information of subtitled screenings going on across the country and you can ask for your subtitled shows to be listed. The website also provides subtitled film trailers.

<http://www.yourlocalcinema.com/>

Action on Hearing Loss:

AOHL is a national charity and their website holds a lot of useful information about accessibility for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. AOHL can also offer advice and install accessibility equipment.

<http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/>

The British Deaf Association:

The BDA is largest Deaf organisation in the UK run by Deaf people. Their website contains helpful information on BSL, working with BSL interpreters and communicating with Deaf people.

<http://www.bda.org.uk/>

'We began Subtitled Mondays in order to provide hard of hearing audiences across the Sheffield region with regular accessible screenings. Subtitled English-language films are often marginalised in certain screening times and we wanted to broaden this out to offer many screenings of multiple films.'

Joan Parsons, Senior Programmer, Showroom Cinema

The UK Cinema Association:

The UK Cinema Association (UKCA) represents the interests of over 90 per cent of UK cinema operators by number and market share. The UKCA website contains facts and figures on the UK cinema industry and brings attention to key issues facing it, such as disability access.

<http://www.cinemauk.org.uk/>

ⁱ (Information sourced on 12/01/2016 from Action on Hearing Loss website 'Know Your Equipment' leaflet for cinema staff.

http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/~media/Documents/Campaigns/Access%20to%20everyday%20services/Campaigning%20materials/Know_your_equipment.ashx)